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Heart Disease Decline Keeps U.S. Life Expectancy at Record Level

Overall life expectancy at birth in the United States reached 75 years in 1987 and remained at that record high in 1988. A major factor in the continued rise in life expectancy is the downward trend in mortality from cardiovascular disease. Ageadjusted death rates for heart disease, the leading cause of death, declined 33 percent from 1970 to 1987; stroke mortality was down 54 percent during the same period.

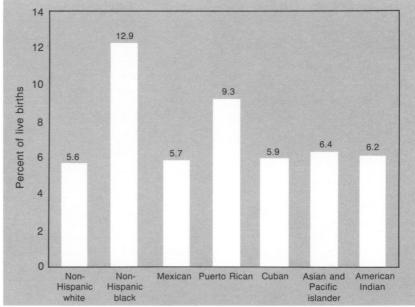
While overall health improves, current statistics document striking disparities in the health of blacks and other minorities. Life expectancy for black males declined again in 1988 to 65.1 years at birth, after an unprecedented 2-year decline between 1984 and 1986, with no further change in 1987. The gap between the white and black infant mortality rate widened between 1986 and 1987, with a 3-percent decline in the rate for white infants to 8.6 deaths per 1,000 live births and a less than 1 percent decline for black infants to 17.9 deaths per 1,000 live births

These and other statistics on the health of the nation appear in "Health, United States, 1989," the 14th in a series of reports from the Secretary of Health and Human Services to the President and the Congress. This volume also contains the fourth triennial "Prevention Profile," charting progress toward meeting the 1990 Objectives in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. The 1989 health report shows continuing trends in four major areas: health status and determinants, use of health resources, health care resources, and health care expenditures. Highlights of the report:

Health Status and Determinants

- In 1988, 60 percent of women 15–44 years of age used some method of contraception. Among formerly and currently married women using contraception in 1988, female sterilization was the most frequently used method. Almost 60 percent of never married women used birth control pills while 20 percent chose condoms as their method of contraception, up from 12 percent in 1982.
- The percent of low birth weight infants has remained essentially unchanged during the 1980s at 7 percent (see chart). However, there are large differences among ethnic and racial groups, with rates highest among black (12.7) and Puerto Rican infants (9.3).

Low birth weight rates by race and ethnicity, United States, 1987



SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, Division of Vital Statistics

 As of September 30, 1989, more than 63,000 deaths occurred among persons with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Homosexual and bisexual activity as a conduit for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes AIDS accounted for more than 77 percent of the 36,000 deaths among white non-Hispanic persons with AIDS 13 years of age and older, compared to 38 percent of the 17,600 black non-Hispanic deaths and 53 percent of the Hispanic AIDS deaths. By contrast, 7 percent of the white non-Hispanic deaths, 37 percent of the black non-Hispanic deaths, and 24 percent of the Hispanic deaths were in the intravenous drug use transmission category.

Health Care Resources

- There were 71,000 discharges from non-Federal short-stay hospitals with a diagnosis of AIDS in 1988. Men 20–49 years of age accounted for 82 percent of all AIDS discharges. Almost 1 million days of care were provided to AIDS patients, whose average length of stay (13.8 days) was more than twice that (6.5 days) for all discharges.
- Short-stay hospital admissions declined 10 percent between 1984 and 1987, from 37.1 million to 33.6 million. In contrast, outpatient visits in short-stay hospitals increased 12 percent during this

period from 268 to 301 million.

• Between 1980 and 1987, active registered nurses with baccalaureate degrees increased by 47 percent and registered nurses with master's and doctorate degrees increased by 44 percent. Between 1987 and 1988, first-year enrollment in nursing schools rose 4 percent, reversing the 27-percent decline observed over the previous 3 years.

Health Expenditures

- In 1987, national health care expenditures in the United States totaled \$500 million, an average of \$1,987 per person. U.S. health spending continues to account for a larger share of gross domestic product (GDP) than in other major industrialized countries, and the gap continues to widen. In 1987, the United States devoted 11.2 percent of its GDP to health, a 3-percent increase over the previous year.
- Expenditures for HIV-related activities by the Federal Government increased from \$6 million in 1982 to \$1.5 billion in 1988. Of the total in 1988, 40 percent was for research, 31 percent for medical care, 23 percent for education and prevention, and 6 percent for cash assistance.

Obtain"Health, United States, 1989" from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. The stock number is 017-022-01104-2. Price \$19.

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